AN ERRONEOUS RECORD OF HEVEA IN COLOMBIA

BY

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In Rees' "Cyclopedia" (39 (1819) sub *Siphonia*), there is a most interesting reference to a Mutis collection of *Hevea guianensis* Aubl. ("*Siphonia elastica*") from Colombia. Sir J. E. Smith, who compiled the section of the encyclopedia on *Siphonia*,[3] wrote: "There is, indeed, in the Linnaean herbarium, besides the original specimen,[4] marked with this last name [*Siphonia elastica*], another from Mutis, which that learned botanist judged to be a distinct species, though affording, as some other trees do, a similar gum. The leaflets in this specimen are larger, more acute at each end, and destitute of partial stalks. The calyx is nearly half an inch long. The

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[3] Lady Smith: "Memoir and correspondence of the late Sir James Edward Smith, M.D." 1 (1832) 488–489; B. D. Jackson: "An attempt to ascertain the actual dates of publication of the various parts of Rees' Cyclopedia" (1895) 3.

[4] This statement undoubtedly refers to a specimen of *Hevea guianensis* preserved in the Linnaean Society in Smith's herbarium. From all appearances of the specimen, it is one of the Aublet collection from French Guiana and represents the type of the genus.

younger Linnaeus, in his *Supplementum* 422, promised to publish something at a future time respecting the various trees that yield an elastic gum of the same utility as the *Caoutchouc;* but he did not live to execute his design."

From the point of view of the taxonomic history of *Hevea*, the genus of the Pará rubber tree, the existence of a Mutis specimen would be of the utmost significance. It would represent the earliest known collection of the genus from Colombia, the northwesternmost sector of its range. A Mutis specimen would also be of extreme importance as it would alter our understanding of the distribution of *Hevea*, for, so far as we are aware, no Mutis material was collected in those parts of the Amazon and Orinoco drainage areas where the genus is known to occur.

For these reasons, we consulted the Mutis material to which Smith made reference and which is preserved in Linnaeus' herbarium at the Linnaean Society. The specimen, included in the *Jatropha* folder, is not a *Hevea* but represents the rutaceous *Cusparia trifoliata* (Willd.) Engler,[5] the type of which was collected in Venezuela.

Comprising several leaves and an inflorescence of fertilized flowers from which the corollas have dropped, the specimen is mounted upon paper bearing a Spanish watermark. In the upper right corner of the sheet, there is, in Mutis' handwriting, a figure "89." At the bottom of the sheet, the elder Linnaeus had written "Hevea" on one line and "elastica" below it, an epithet which has never been published. The younger Linnaeus scratched out the word "Hevea" and substituted "Jatropha," but he did not cite the collection in his *Supplementum 422* under *Jatropha elastica* to which concept he reduced

[5] Tabula in Humboldt. Plant. Aequin. 2 (1813) t. 97.

Aublet's *Hevea guianensis*. Elsewhere on the sheet, apparently in the elder Linnaeus' hand, there is an annotation "Gummi elastique."

A detailed search through the collection of Mutis' correspondence with Linnaeus, preserved at the Linnaean Society, revealed an enumeration of two shipments of plants from Colombia to Sweden. The specimen in question was included in the second shipment. We find that Mutis had made, under "89" in the enumeration of the specimens of this shipment, the following interesting annotation: "Pro Chinchona habita ab incolis guyanae." Even though the term *guyana* was rather loosely employed in this early period to designate much of southern Venezuela and the Orinoco basin, it has been impossible for us to ascertain Mutis' source for this statement. It is, of course, highly significant as an observation, because *Cusparia trifoliata* is the source of Angostura-bitters and has been used rather widely in South American folk-medicine as a febrifuge. Humboldt states that "On the coasts of New Andalusia, the cuspa is considered as a kind of Cinchona." [6]

Further study of Mutis' correspondence has failed to shed any light on Linnaeus' source for his annotation "Gummi elastique." It is most probable, in our opinion, that the note was added somewhat casually for the benefit of students after the plant had been determined, to Linnaeus' apparent satisfaction, as representing the concept now known as *Hevea guianensis*. *Cusparia trifoliata*, of course, is not a latex-bearing plant.

There is an additional annotation on the sheet. It is in pencil, apparently in the handwriting of Smith, and states that the specimen is markedly different from a sterile specimen from Brazil which Linnaeus had likewise

[6] Personal Narrative (translated by H. M. Williams) 3 (1822) 27.

annotated "Gummi elastique" but which had not been labelled with a Latin epithet. This Brazilian specimen[7] is neither *Jatropha* nor *Hevea* but, curiously, would seem also to be a rutaceous plant, *Esenbeckia febrifuga* (St. Hil.) Mart., likewise a source of bitters and often, in an earlier period, used to adulterate or falsify true Angostura-bitters. It naturally does not represent a lacticiferous plant, and the annotation with reference to gum elastic is as erroneous as the analogous annotation on the sheet of the Mutis specimen of *Cusparia trifoliata* and was undoubtedly made for the same purpose.

We wish to express our appreciation to Spencer Savage, Esq., Assistant Secretary of the Linnaean Society, for his very kind help in the study which has led to the clarification of the erroneous record of a Mutis collection of *Hevea*.

[7] The Brazilian specimens in the herbarium of Linnaeus were probably collected by Joaquim Velloso de Miranda (1733–1815) and sent to Linnaeus by Domenico Vandelli (1735–1816). He collected in Minas Geraes.